

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 280451Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2018

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2608

FOR EA/TB - MR. GIBSON ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BM

SUBJ: BURMESE COUP PLOT - SUGGESTED EMBASSY PRESS GUIDANCE

1. SINCE THE GUB BROKE THE STORY OF THE COUP PLOT, THERE HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY FREQUENT RUMORS CONCERNING THE REQUEST OF ONE OF THE PLOTTERS FOR EMBASSY ASYLUM ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 2. PARTICULARLY WHEN THE PROMISED PUBLIC TRIAL OPENS, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A GARBLED VERSION OF THIS EPISODE, PERHAPS UNFAVORABLE TO U.S., WILL REACH AN INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OR WIRE SERVICE OR THAT VISITING JOURNALISTS MIGHT PICK UP A GARBLE. AS A PRECAUTION AGAINST THIS CONTINGENCY AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL BE PRESSED FOR INFORMATION BY NEWSMEN, THE EMBASSY IS SUBMITTING SUGGESTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN. THE MOST DAMAGING VERSION OF THE RUMOR, FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE USG IMAGE AMONG THOSE IN BURMA WHO OPPOSE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND AMONG THE ANTI-NE WIN BURMESE EMIGRE COMMUNITY IN THE U.S. IS ONE TO THE EFFECT THAT THE EMBASSY TURNED THE ASYLUM SEEKER OVER TO THE GUB AUTHORITIES. AS THE EMBASSY'S REPORTING OF THE INCIDENT SHOWS, THIS IS NOT TRUE. (FYI: REPORTS THAT THE INDIVIDUAL WAS PICKED UP MORE THAN 48 HOURS AFTER BEING DROPPED OFF BY THE DUTY OFFICER CONFIRM FACT THAT THE EMBASSY DID NOT HAND THE MAN OVER TO THE GUB.) WE HAVE LEFT THE FINAL ANSWER BLANK BECAUSE IT IS ESSENTIALLY IN THE DEPARTMENT'S PURVIEW, BUT INCLUDED THE QUESTION BECAUSE WE THINK IT

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IS INEVITABLE.

2. SUGGESTED Q'S AND A'S FOR DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN:

Q. THERE IS A REPORT THAT ONE OF THE OFFICERS INVOLVED IN THE COUP PLOT AGAINST PRESIDENT NE WIN ASKED FOR ASYLUM IN THE AMERICAN EMBASSY BUT WAS TURNED DOWN. IS THAT TRUE?

A. WHETHER THERE WAS A COUP PLOT, IF SO WHO WAS INVOLVED IN IT, AND WHOM IT WAS DIRECTED AGAINST ARE MATTERS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY ESTABLISHED, AND A TRIAL IS STILL PENDING. I CAN CONFIRM THAT A MAN CLAIMING TO BE A BURMESE ARMY OFFICER FLEEING FROM MILITARY AUTHORITIES CAME TO THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE COMPOUND AT ABOUT 7:30 P.M. ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 2 TO REQUEST ASYLUM. WHILE NOT REFUSED ADMISSION OR TEMPORARY REFUGE, THE MAN WAS INFORMED THAT THE AMBASSADOR, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE, WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO TURN HIM OVER TO THE DULY CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES ON DEMAND.

Q. IT IS REPORTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR TURNED THE MAN OVER TO THE BURMESE AUTHORITIES. IS THAT CORRECT?

A. THAT IS NOT CORRECT. THE EMBASSY HAS NO POLICE POWERS OR DUTIES. ON BEING TOLD THAT THE COULD NOT BE GRANTED ASYLUM, THE MAN CHOSE NOT TO REMAIN IN THE AMBASSADOR'S COMPOUND, AND THE AMBASSADOR DID NOT SEEK TO DETAIN HIM.

Q. DID THE AMBASSADOR INFORM THE BURMESE AUTHORITIES?

A. THE AMBASSADOR DID INFORM THE AUTHORITIES ON THE FOLLOWING MORNING. AT THE TIME (THE NIGHT OF JULY 2), THE AMBASSADOR WAS UNABLE TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THE MAN WAS TELLING THE TRUTH, OR WAS JUST A CRACKPOT. IF HE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH, THEN BY HIS OWN ACCOUNT THE AUTHORITIES WERE ALREADY AWARE OF ANY THREAT HE MIGHT REPRESENT AND WERE TAKING PRECAUTIONS.

Q. VSWHY WAS IT NECESSARY FOR THE AMBASSADOR TO INFORM GUB?

A. THE AMBASSADOR WAS OF COURSE CONCERNED ABOUT ANY POTENTIAL THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY; ALSO, IN VIEW OF THE MAN'S APPROACH TO THE EMBASSY, IF THERE WAS A CONFIDENTIAL

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PLOT, AND IF THE AUTHORITIES KNEW OF IT, THE AMBASSADOR DID NOT WANT THE GUB TO WRONGLY ASSUME U.S. INVOLVEMENT.

Q. DID THE AMBASSADOR'S INFORMATION LEAD TO THE MAN'S APPREHENSION AND ARREST?

A. THE AMBASSADOR DID NOT DISCLOSE THE MAN'S IDENTITY OR POSITION. THE AUTHORITIES WERE ALREADY AWARE OF THE PLOT AND APPEARED TO KNOW THE INDIVI-

DUAL'S IDENTITY.

Q. WHAT IS THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION ON ASYLUM?

A.

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